



## Press Release

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### **Dole Food Company, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, and Healthy Kids Georgia Partner to Improve Early Childhood Nutrition Standards**

Atlanta, GEORGIA – December 14, 2012 - - Today, Dole Food Company and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle's Healthy Kids Georgia Program announced a partnership with the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to promote good nutrition and increased physical activity in early childcare and education programs.

"Georgia's childhood obesity epidemic is too large for any one organization or person to address alone. We must work together to collaboratively present our children and families with healthy lifestyle options so we can bring about real change and tackle this daunting challenge," said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle. "Innovative public-private partnerships, like the one we are launching today, that bring together state, private, and community resources to confront the troubling trends we face in childhood obesity will have a lasting impact on future generations."

The new program, called Quality Rated, is Georgia's newly implemented quality rating and improvement system. Programs voluntarily participating in Quality Rated receive points by demonstrating commitment to five program standards, including child health, nutrition and physical activity. Standard 2 offers early care and education programs the opportunity to reflect on their current health and nutrition standards and identify areas that can be improved. Points are assessed for this standard based on the completion of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment; written improvement plans with documentation of actions taken to complete the plans; and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed for the standard.

"This is the third year of our partnership with the Lt. Governor and Healthy Kids Georgia and the DECAL program is the most comprehensive element to date," said Marty Ordman, Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Dole Food Company. "Quality Rated rewards early childhood education program that are meeting important nutrition standards and we're honored to help projects hit these goals by exposing young students to more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis."

As many schools are scaling back their implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, Georgia is providing incentives to schools that are working to serve better food to their students. Research shows that children must be exposed to vegetables 10 to 12 times before they will eat them on their own. Programs that increase this exposure in new settings will help young people develop healthy eating habits that they will carry with them well into adulthood.

“We know that even our youngest learners need to start understanding why healthy food choices and exercise lead to a path of a lifelong health and well-being,” said Bobby Cagle, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. “That is why the Dole Food Company and Lieutenant Governor Cagle’s Healthy Kids Georgia Program are going to make a real difference as they recognize Quality Rated child care programs that are committed to making health, nutrition and physical activity a priority. Public-private partnerships like this play a vitally important role in helping us meet our goals of nurturing Georgia’s youngest children, keeping them safe and healthy, and enriching their lives.”

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### **About Dole Food Company**

Dole, with 2011 net revenues of \$6.9 billion, is the world’s largest producer and marketer of high-quality fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, and is the leading producer of organic bananas. Dole markets a growing line of packaged and frozen fruit and is a produce industry leader in nutrition education and research.

### **About Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.state.ga.us](http://www.dec.state.ga.us).

### **About Healthy Kids Georgia**

An initiative of Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, the Lt. Governor’s Healthy Kids Georgia is a collaboration of the Office of Lieutenant Governor, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools Program, and other corporate and community partners. Formed in 2010 to address the epidemic levels of childhood obesity in Georgia and the serious physical and emotional consequences of the problem, the program encourages schools to partner with their local communities and the Healthy Schools program to confront the childhood obesity crisis by implementing health and wellness programs in Georgia’s schools. Additionally, through Public Private Partnerships, Healthy Kids Georgia is the conduit for corporate support strategies to be implemented throughout the state upholding the mission to promote healthy lifestyles.

### **About The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation**

Formed in 1995, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation promotes innovative solutions to improve the lives of youth and their families, seeking results that move communities beyond what seems possible today. The Foundation invests in early childhood development, education, green space, and the arts and leads giving programs for each of the Blank Family of Businesses, including the Atlanta Falcons. Mr. Blank co-founded The Home Depot, the world’s largest home improvement retailer, in 1978 and retired from the company as co-chairman in 2001. Through the foundation and his family’s personal giving, Mr. Blank has granted more than

\$250 million to various charitable organizations. Visit the Foundation web site for more information at [www.BlankFoundation.org](http://www.BlankFoundation.org).

### **About YMCA Metro Atlanta**

The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn grow and connect. Visit <http://www.ymcaatlanta.org> or call 404-588-YMCA (9622).